

**Bedfordshire
Family History Society
Journal**

Vol 24 No 5 Mar 2024



A Gentlemen's House, Woburn - 18th Century

**BEDFORDSHIRE
FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY**

A member of the Family History Federation
Founded 1977
Registered Charity No. 281677

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FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY
JOURNAL**



**VOL 24 NO 5 MAR 2024
CONTENTS**

New banking arrangements for BFHS.....	2
BFHS Volunteer Vacancies.....	3
Surname Index for this <i>Journal</i>	4
BFHS Programme.....	5
Thomas Carter/Curtis of Silsoe/New York - Part 2.....	7
Our meetings at Mark Rutherford School.....	26
Victorian Workhouses - The problem with the poor.....	27
Front Cover Illustration and as it is today.....	29
Why not write something for the <i>Journal</i> ?.....	30
Do we have your current email address?.....	30
Bedfordshire Heritage Tea Towels.....	32
Dates for your 2024 diary.....	33
Bedfordshire Parish Registers.....	34
BFHS Email Addresses.....	inside back cover

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NEW BANKING ARRANGEMENTS FOR BFHS

We have recently opened a new account with Barclays to enable us to operate an account with dual authorisation online banking. This will simplify paying many of our society expenses. In the meantime, we will continue to maintain our NatWest bank account.

Full details are given in the Renewal Notice that accompanied the December 2023 issue of the Journal.

Please use the new Barclays bank details for bank transfers. When convenient, please change any standing order from NatWest to Barclays and please remember to cancel your standing order to our NatWest account.

If you pay your **2024** membership by standing order or bank transfer, please drop an email to **treasurer@bfhs.org.uk** to advise your name, post code, payment method and membership type.

Your help would be appreciated.

BEDFORDSHIRE

Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Huntingdonshire

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*Member of the
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BFHS VOLUNTEER VACANCIES

Our Society cannot exist without its committee members who volunteer their time to support the functions of the society. At this year's AGM our officers will require re-election to their posts and Lynn Manning has indicated her intention to stand down as Secretary at the AGM. We are fortunate that an existing member has offered to undertake this role because under our constitution the society could not continue to function. However, there are other opportunities for you to volunteer for the Society and involves only giving a few hours of your time each week. Paul Woodcraft is stepping down as Journal Distribution Manager and Funeral Directors Project Leader, and we are also seeking a Vice Chairman to support the Chairman's role.

The committee usually meets on the third Friday of each month via Zoom at 7pm. Meetings usually last less than 2 hours and involve the dealing of business to run the society. Please feel free to come along and observe a meeting, under no obligation, and see how the committee works. Copies of Microsoft 365 will be provided to committee members if required.

Below is a list of areas where we need help.

Publicity Officer

This role is currently carried out by the Secretary in addition to the normal activities. The role requires someone to ensure local press and other organisations are kept up to date with the latest programme and information on what the society is doing.



Vice Chairman

This role is currently vacant and is required to support the Chairman's activities in running the society.



If you have any queries regarding any of these roles, or wish to offer help, please contact the Chairman, Mark Tresidder or Secretary, Lynn Manning, via email at chairman@bfhs.org.uk or secretary@bfhs.org.uk, alternatively you can talk to us at meetings.

Journal Distribution Manager

Due to the pending retirement of the incumbent, the above position will be coming vacant shortly and we are therefore looking for a person or persons to take on this duty. A full Role Description is available but the basic duties are as follows:

Collect or receive the journals from the printers.

Print labels to send journals to members.

Send emails with PDF copy of journal to those who have elected to receive them by PDF.

Send emails with PDF copy to Swap Societies.

Receive and record Swap journals and send on to Webmaster.

BFHS VOLUNTEER VACANCIES

Receive, check, and record requests for Access to our Members Portal then send on to Webmaster to issue a password.

At present, assembly of labels, journals, stamps, and envelopes for postal distribution is done by a second person.

You will require a computer/laptop with a printer and an internet connection. Time involved is a few hours each month.



Funeral Directors' Records Project Leader

We are also looking for someone to lead our small team working on Funeral Directors' Records. The project involves research into the Funeral Directors of Bedfordshire both past and present, and arranging digitisation, transcription, and indexing of their records to put on our Members Only part of our website.

You will require a computer/laptop and an internet connection. Scanning equipment will be provided by the Society. Time required can be as little or as much as you can give with no set targets.



If you feel you would like to get involved and take on any of these roles, or just help with the transcribing and checking, please email Paul Woodcraft at distribution@bfhs.org.uk.

JOURNAL SURNAME INDEX

Below is the Surname Index for this *Journal*, providing you with a rapid way of finding a Surname within this *Journal*. Note that Members' Surname Interests are not indexed.

The Surname Index for *Journals* on the BFHS website will be updated in due course. □

Name	Page	Name	Page	Name	Page
Brooks	9	Heighington	8-10, 13-18, 20, 24	Pitt	13, 15-16
Burbidge	14	Hopper	9-10, 12, 14-18, 22, 24	Powell	13
Burke	13	McKie	13-14	Taylor	13, 16-17
Carter	7-8, 10, 13-14, 25	Ofaley	10	Twelvetree	8
Curtis	7-12, 14-25	Offeld	21-22	Wiffen	29
Deans	13-14	Offley	10, 17-19, 24		



PROGRAMME

All talks are hybrid meetings taking place physically at Mark Rutherford School (see page 26 for details) and virtually via Zoom. Doors at the school open at 7 pm with the talks starting at 7.30 pm.

Shefford's Jewish Evacuees Tony Dawson Friday 19 April 2024 (Note date)



Tony Dawson was originally born in Clifton but moved out of Bedfordshire when he went off to university; he returned to live in Shefford in 1996. Tony joined Shefford Town Council in 2016. He has previously been a member of the Joint Burial Board Committee and the Chair of the Services and Environment Committee. Tony has been involved in the refurbishment of the War Memorial, the design and launch of the Jubilee postcards, and the Council's website. Since 2018, Tony has edited the Council's Newsline magazine.

The Letter of the Law David Annal Friday 3 May 2024



Dave Annal is a professional researcher with over 40 years' experience. He is a former Principal Family History Specialist with the National Archives and he worked at the Family Records Centre for many years. In 2019 he was awarded a Fellowship of the Society of Genealogists. Dave has written a number of family history books including the bestselling beginner's guide *Easy Family History* and Pen & Sword's *Birth, Marriage & Death Records* (with Audrey Collins) and, with Peter Christian, he is the co-author of *Census: the Family Historian's Guide*. He is also a regular contributor to Family Tree Magazine where he runs the Family Tree Academy. Dave is a popular speaker on the family history circuit and has spoken at a number of major events including Who Do You Think You Are? Live and Rootstech, as well as giving regular talks to family history groups.

The records that we use to research our family history are largely the result of a variety of Acts of Parliament. A good understanding of the legislation behind the census returns, parish registers and civil registration records (and many more) can make an enormous difference when it comes to interpreting the information left behind by our ancestors. This talk looks at the major pieces of legislation from Thomas Cromwell's 'order' which established the parish register system in 1538, through the various Census Acts and the ground-breaking 1836 Act for the registering of Births, Deaths, and Marriages in England to investigate how the legislation can impact on your research.



PROGRAMME (cont'd)

AGM

and accompanying short presentation (tba)

Friday 7 June 2024

British Newspapers Denise Bates Friday 5 July 2024



I was born in Sheffield. I studied Modern History at St Anne's College, Oxford, where I specialised in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A few years as a Chartered Accountant followed, until I swapped paid employment for bringing up a family, and a range of community roles. During this time I wrote features on subjects including child welfare, school governance and IT for children and reviewed books and software. When I returned to work it was to the charitable sector.

Discovering our family trees rekindled my passion for history. When an opportunity arose to research and write about the hidden world of the women

who used to work underground in coal mines I decided to take it. *Pit Lasses* challenged a century of misconceptions about these hardy women and their lives.

Breach of Promise to Marry explores what sort of women were the real Miss Havishams and what suing for damages after a broken engagement reveals about the social values of the time. It was inspired by reading about two very different breach of promise cases in a Victorian newspaper.

Historical Research Using British Newspapers stemmed from my practical experience of researching *Pit Lasses* and *Breach of Promise to Marry* and the very positive reaction to some blogs about newspapers as historical sources which I wrote for *The British Newspaper Archive*.

I now research and write books and articles and give talks. My key areas of interest are British social history, newspapers and fiction and the media as historical sources.

THOMAS CARTER/CURTIS OF SILSOE/NEW YORK - PART 2

Paul Cox

The 1860 American census for New Jersey, Patterson West Ward, shows a large household of 'lodgers' among whom we find a Thomas CURTIS, 30, from England, working as a Book Keeper, see below. I believe this was actually Thomas CARTER who had fled from Woburn.

1	831451	William Bryan	6 M			New Jersey
2	482	Alexander Blair	45 M	Machinist		Scotland
3		Jane	48 F			New Jersey
4		Calphine Menden	33 F			"
5		Joseph	18 M	Machinist		"
6		John	15 M	App. Reddy		"
7		George	22 M	Machinist		"
8		William Blair	6 M			"
9		David M. Blair	35 M	Machinist		"
10		Thomas Curtis	30 M	Book Keeper		England
11		John Stanley	30 M	Carpenter		"
12		Samuel Norton	17 M	App. Machinist		"
13		James	40 M			Scotland
14		Elizabeth Thife	20 F	Dress Maker		"
15	832453	Henry Pedra	33 M	Brick		New Jersey

Mr Curtis had picked a difficult time to be in America. The Civil War started on 12 April 1861 and lasted for four years. He was therefore included on a schedule of 'Persons subject to do military duty' in June 1863 for the Passaic region (see below), with a Profession or Trade listed as 'Express'¹, although there is no evidence that he ever entered the army for the Union States.

I compile all persons subject to do military duty between the ages of twenty and thirty-five years, and all non-combatant persons subject to do military duty above the age of thirty-five years and under the age of forty-four.

SCHEDULE II.—CONSOLIDATED LIST of all persons of CLASS II, subject to do military duty in the 11th Congressional District, of Passaic, Bergen and Essex, Newark State of New Jersey, enumerated during the month of June, 1863.

Capt. James M. Brown, Provost Marshal.

RESIDENCE.	NAME.	AGE	DESCRIPTION.		PLACE OF BIRTH. (Showing the State, Territory, or County.)	FORMER MILITARY SERVICE.
			AGE	PROFESSION, OCCUPATION, OR TRADE.		
Passaic Co Patterson	1 Campbell, A. Gibbs	37	77	Book Keeper	N.Y.	
	2 Curtis Thomas	36		Express	Eng	
	3 Connell Dennis	36		Laborer	Arkans	
	4 Clark John	44		Carpenter	"	
	5 Conner Patrick	36		Turner	"	
	6 Gray Aaron	39		Clerk	N.Y.	
	7 Chandler Wm	44		Weaver	Eng	

¹ Most likely an Expressman employed in the transportation of mail, parcels, etc, especially. as an employee of an express company. OED.

By the time of the next American census of 1870, the war was over and the whole Curtis/Carter family were together in the United States, living in Passaic, New Jersey, under Patterson Ward 4. Obviously, he had reinvented himself, found lodgings and employment. His wife had joined him and had brought Fanny jnr, the girl who had been staying with her at Edward TWELVETREE's house, and they had another relative with them, see below.

31	484 671	Curtis Thomas	42	M	Dr	Salesman			England	1	1
32		— Fanny	43	F	W	Keeps House	6000	1000	England	1	1
33		— Jennie	15	F	W	Attends School			England	1	1
34		Heighington M E	45	F	W	at Home			England	1	1
35	485 672	Van Houten P E	36	M	Dr	Farmer	50000	6000	New Jersey		

1870 U.S. Census, Passaic, New Jersey:

Curtis Thomas, 42, Salesman, born England

Curtis Fanny, 43, Keeps house, born England

Curtis Fannie, 15, attends school, born England. [The spelling of Fanny/Fannie seems to change at whim].

HEIGHINGTON M E, 36, at home, born England. [This was Mary Elizabeth Heighington, Fanny snr's sister].

A Fanny Curtis, aged 48 (which would be the correct age) travelled from Liverpool to New York on the ship Bothnia, arriving 14 October 1875, see below. Had she been home to England to see her family? She is described as 'Widow' in the passenger lists, which would have been a lie. Her nationality was listed as American, but she could have taken up citizenship by this point.

Jane Kelly	28	F	Matron	US
Mary Donnelly	45	F	—	—
Fanny Curtis	48	F	Widow	—
Hannah Scraggs	67	F	Matron	—
Adela Carver	35	F	Spinster	—
Hannah Harlow	33	F	Matron	—
Bertha	11	F	Child	—
Mary Moore	31	F	Matron	—
Mellie Brown	10	F	—	—

The family were still together in Passaic in the 1880 census, which shows they lived on Vreeland Avenue, although their house number was not recorded. Today, this is a broad, leafy, residential area which diagonally bisects the traditional block-road system of most American cities, see overleaf.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Vice Land Avenue	388	572	Curtis Thomas	W	M	53				1			Advertising agent	
			- Fanny	W	F	53	wife			1			keeping house	
			- Fanny	W	F	24	Daughter						at home	
			Heighington Mary E.	W	F	55	sister in law			1			lives in family	
	377	573	Van Blawen Isaac	W	M	66					1		Brick maker	
			- Elizabeth	W	F	43	wife				1		keeping house	
			- Lemuel	W	F	26	Daughter				1		at home	
			- Frank	W	M	13	son						at school	
			- Charles	W	M	9	son						at school	
	390	574	Heracup Philip	W	M	37					1		Laborer	

1880 U.S. census, Passaic:

- Curtis Thomas, 53, Advertising Agent for Sun[?] paper
- Curtis Fanny, 53, wife, Keeping house
- Curtis Fanny, 24, daughter, at home
- Heighington Mary E., 55, sister-in-law, lives in family

Fanny jnr had now grown up and married a Peter G HOPPER in October 1881. When they had a son on 11 August 1882, they named him George Heighington Hopper, keeping the family name going. I presume she had to get a birth certificate for herself as part of registering her own child, as she had one created in the name of 'Fanny Curt Hopper, Maiden Name: Heighington, Age: 27, Birth Place: Bury [sic] of Biscay - On Ship'. This marriage did not last. She sued Hopper for divorce in November 1892 and named an Ella BROOKS as the guilty party. A divorce was granted.

DIVORCE CASES.

Discordant Couples Ask to Have the Knot Untied.

Fannie H. Hopper's suit for an absolute divorce from Peter Hopper was one of those on the calendar of the Supreme Court for disposal by Judge Cullen this morning. The co-respondent is a woman known as Ella Brooks, residing in Parkville.

Mrs. Hopper was called to the stand by her lawyer, Jerry A. Wernberg. She testified that she lived at 207 Sixth avenue and was married to the defendant in October, 1881, at Paterson, N. J. She last saw him on Tuesday at Miller's Hotel, Paterson, in the presence of Clara Callendar and John S. Stryker, a clerk in Mr. Wernberg's office. After hearing further testimony Judge Cullen reserved his decision.

MRS. HOPPER SECURES A DIVORCE.

Justice Cullen has granted Mrs. Fanny H. Hopper a divorce from her husband, Peter G., on the statutory grounds.

We heard a mechanic say that he would not be without Salvation Oil. It kills pain.

Above, *Standard Union* Brooklyn, New York, 29th November 1892.

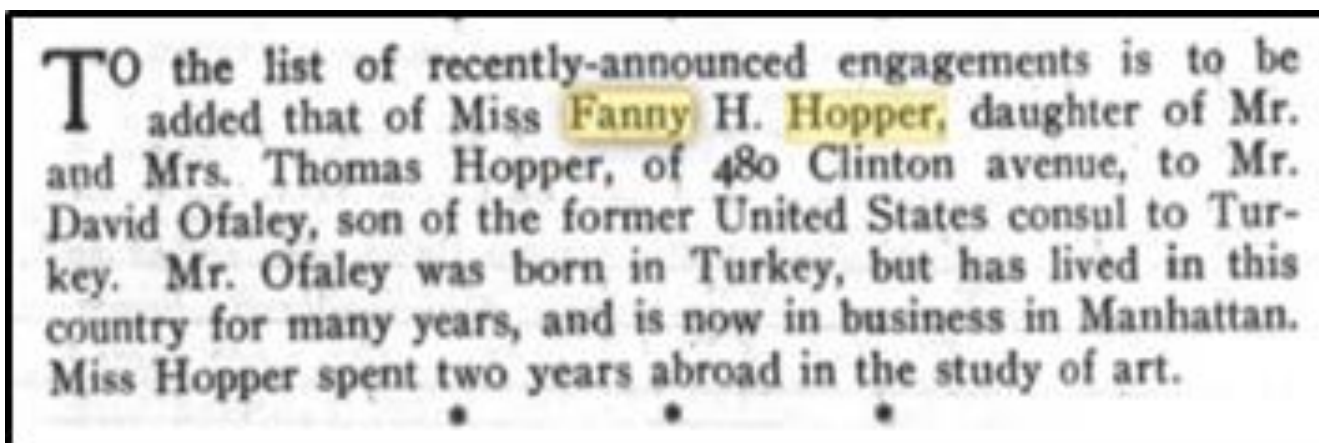
Left, *Times Union*, Brooklyn, 26th November 1892.

Mary Elizabeth Heighington, their connection back to Woburn, England and who was still living with them, died in New York, aged 71, on 13 February 1895.

In 1902, Thomas reached 75 years of age and had been making a name for himself in new ways, leading to interest from the local press. A picture of him and Fanny snr (see next page) appeared in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* on 28 December with a first-hand description of his life - since coming to America anyway! See page after next - the rest of this article is included in his obituary.

Fanny snr passed away early the next year, on 24 March 1903. She was described in death records as 'Fanny Heighington Curtis [Fanny Heighington Heighington], aged 76, Birth Place: England, Residence: 480 Clinton Ave, Years in US: 40, cause of death: Syncope Senectus, Pneumonia Heart Dilatation.' An obituary followed in the *Brooklyn Eagle*, see page after next.

Fanny jnr had found a new suitor by 1904 and in July they were engaged. Wrongly named in the *Brooklyn Life* newspaper of 16 July 1904, see below, her new beau was in fact a Mr David OFFLEY, but her family had had another name change. She was now styled Miss Fanny H Hopper, daughter of Mr and Mrs. Thomas Hopper! Was this deliberate, to disguise the fact that she was a divorcee or just an editor's mistake? With so many lies about their family history and situation, I am not sure that I believe that she had had two years abroad studying art! In a later description, she is called a 'Widow'. After this report, the name Curtis returns again.



TO the list of recently-announced engagements is to be added that of Miss Fanny H. Hopper, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Hopper, of 480 Clinton avenue, to Mr. David Ofaley, son of the former United States consul to Turkey. Mr. Ofaley was born in Turkey, but has lived in this country for many years, and is now in business in Manhattan. Miss Hopper spent two years abroad in the study of art.

It is entirely possible that with Fanny jnr having been taken to America at the age of about 5-6, she had no idea about her actual beginnings and true identity. All Thomas and Fanny snr had to do was keep using their new names and swerve any questions on the details of their birthplaces etc. I would have thought it was quite easy to claim lost birth certificates and other paperwork. With the amount of immigration to the US that would be common. As long as no one took an interest in their back-story, what could possibly go wrong?

Then the name Thomas Carter appeared in the British press again, in 1904, with a legal notice in the *London Gazette* of 20 September, which was picked up and run in the *Beds Times*, (full text below), trying to trace his wife and her brother for family inheritance reasons. It was stated they believed that Fanny snr had gone to America with her husband in about 1855 - four years out, but 40 years had passed. Somehow, this news reached them in America.

PURSUANT to Order of the Chancery of the County Palatine of Lancaster (Liverpool District) dated the 25th day of July made In the Matter of the trusts of an Indenture of Settlement dated the 10th day March 1856 made between Thomas



MR. AND MRS. THOMAS CURTIS.

They Will Celebrate Their Golden Wedding Next Saturday, When the Veteran Bowler Also Celebrates his Seventy-fifth Birthday Anniversary.

FATHER OF BOWLING IS 75 YEARS OLD.

Thomas Curtis to Celebrate
Golden Wedding on Natal
Anniversary.

WHAT HE HAS DONE FOR GAME.

Over a Quarter of a Century Devoted to
Developing the Winter
Sport.

A dual celebration of more than ordinary interest will take place next Saturday at 480 Clinton avenue, when Mr. and Mrs. **Thomas Curtis** will receive the congratulations of their many friends, on the occasion of their golden wedding anniversary. While, at the same time, Mr. Curtis, who is familiarly known locally and throughout the country as the father of bowling, will reach the advanced age of 75.

There will be but few relatives to do honor to the aged couple on the occasion. They have never been blessed with children and are practically alone in the world, so far as kith and kin is concerned, there being but one nephew, a resident of New Haven, who is expected to be present on the day named to support the bridegroom.

Mrs. Curtis will be attended by her adopted daughter, Mrs. Hopper, and the latter's son, George Hopper, both of whom are exceedingly dear to their foster parents.

While Mrs. Curtis shows some of the effects of old age, Mr. Curtis is in splendid physical condition, due, he claims, to his systematic indulgence in the game of bowling, to which he has been addicted, in a physical and business way, during the past twenty-five years.

In explaining how he came to be married

twenty-five years.

In explaining how he came to be married on his twenty-fifth birthday, Mr. Curtis said:

"I came from an early marrying family, which was quite large, I being the seventh son. My parents had married young and impressed me with the advantages of seeing some of the world before settling down to domestic life. My brothers and sisters were leaving the parental roof very young and I made up my mind not to marry until I was 25. I am a stickler on keeping appointments and I kept this one, as events show."

Although Mr. and Mrs. Curtis have few relatives, they have a wide circle of friends throughout the country, and these are responding in large numbers with congratulations, while many will attend the festivities in person.

Mr. Curtis, owing to his services in helping to improve the game of tenpin during the past quarter of a century, is known throughout the United States as the "Father of Tenpins" and in order to testify appreciation of the work he has done in their behalf the pin knights have arranged a testimonial, which is to be presented to him with an engrossed set of resolutions on the occasion of his golden wedding.

In fact, so prominent a place has this testimonial taken, locally, that the belief has gained ground that the celebration is to take the form of a "stag." Mr. Curtis hastens to deny this and wishes it to be understood that the fair friends of himself and his wife are expected to be present. Speaking of his long career in bowling, Mr. Curtis said:

My career in the game of tenpin in

Fanny Curtis.

The lovers of bowling in this borough and, in fact, throughout this section of the country, will learn with sorrow of the death of the wife of Thomas L. Curtis at her home yesterday afternoon. "Pop" Curtis, as the veteran bowler is known, has probably more friends than any follower of the pins and the death of his wife will be regretted for his sake by many pin knights. Married for over fifty years the couple celebrated their golden wedding on January 3 and the day was made one of celebration among all the local bowlers. Mr. Curtis was presented at that time with a purse containing \$1,000 and also a set of resolutions showing the esteem of the bowlers. His wife was able to appreciate the honors conferred on her husband and herself, although over 76 years old.

Mrs. Curtis died very quietly, the result of heart failure, without any preliminary suffering at all. Mr. Curtis was with her at the end. The funeral services are to be held at the home of Mr. Curtis, 480 Clinton avenue, to-morrow evening.

Heighington and Emily Elizabeth PITT his wife of the one part and Robert Barge DEANS and John Lennox MCKIE of the other part Taylor v Weir (1904 No 9297) the following enquiry was directed namely:- 1. An enquiry to what children there were of the marriage of Thomas Heighington the elder and Emily Elizabeth Pitt Heighington and whether such children are living or dead and whether such of the said children as are dead lived to attain the age of 21 years or daughters were married and when and to whom and who are the legal personal representatives of any such children as have after having attained the age of 21 years or after marriage if daughters. ANY PERSONS claiming to be a child of the said Thomas Pitt Heighington and Emily Elizabeth his wife or to be the legal personal representatives of any such child as died after attaining the age of 21 years or of a daughter after marriage are their solicitors on or before the 25th day of October 1904 to come in and prove their claims at the Chambers of the Registrar of the Liverpool District the said Court situate at 9 Cook Street, Liverpool, or default thereof they will be peremptorily excluded from the benefit of such Order. Tuesday the 1st day of November 1904 at 11 o'clock in the forenoon at said office is appointed for bearing and adjudicating upon the said claims.

Dated 14th day of September, F. WILLIS TAYLOR Registrar.

Note. - The said Thomas and Emily Elizabeth his wife had amongst others, a child named Fanny and a child named Thomas.

The said Fanny Heighington is believed to have been taken to America from England by a brother-in-law of Thomas Heighington the elder named Carter in or about the year 1855. Thomas Heighington the younger was last heard of at Liverpool in or about the year 1880. He is believed to have been a Chemist's assistant.

The biological mother of Fanny jnr, Emily Elizabeth, had just died in Liverpool. A tree on Ancestry shows that as well as Fanny jnr, the mystery Thomas (James?) Heighington and Emily Elizabeth Pitt had had at least five other children; Edward (1854) William (1857), Thomas (1857), Florence Essington (1858) Percival Godden (1859). Then Thomas snr died in Jamaica in 1858 and Emily remarried to a Thomas Stephens POWELL in 1860. Something happened to him also, so she married a third husband in 1867, John BURKE, having one son with him, Charles Hamilton Burke (1868-1944). I do not know if this son would have also shared any inheritance due.

When Emily died on 4 May 1904, she seems to have been quite poor, leaving just £15 16s 11d in her estate. At the end of her life she was living at Garfield Street, Bootle. The reason her family had put her inheritance into Chancery died when she did, so the monies thus lodged had then become available to her heirs.

Of her son (Fanny jnr's brother), we can find more. Thomas Heighington had been given by his parents to William Heighington, (Fanny snr's brother), who had inherited his father's boot and shoemaker's business in Woburn. He brought Thomas up in his household, but this was not without its problems. The Woburn National School Logbook records that Thomas was punished for cruelly treating a cat in October 1871, (an incident which also made the *Beds Times*) followed the next month by a parent complaining of his use of language so bad that the Head suspended him pending a meeting of the School Committee. Mr Heighington came before the committee to

apologise and withdrew his 'nephew' from the school completely.

Perhaps he was sent away on an apprenticeship, as he appears next on the 1891 census at Charles Street, Westminster, as 'Managing Chemist'. I cannot locate him on the 1881 Census. At some point he began using the middle name Gordon and after working studiously at his trade he ended up being the Chemist and Druggist for the Harrod's store in London by 1898. He even got his name onto some of their wares. He was married in 1899 to a Sarah Rose BURBIDGE and became a leading Freemason in the Alfred Newton Lodge in London. The appeal was also picked up and run by the *Chemist & Druggist magazine* of October 1904 but it only copied what had already appeared in the American newspapers.



Of the two other names in the appeal and their involvement, little is known. A John Lennox McKie was married at South Shields in 1877, but the only other occurrence of that name in old newspapers is the one in the appeal article. Likewise, the only item I can find on Robert Burge Deans is his death reported in the *Morning Chronicle* on Christmas Day 1856, but it has a connection to Jamaica:

On the 20th inst., at Clifton Villas, Maida-hill West, aged 33, Robert Burge Deans, Esq., recently of Falmouth, Jamaica, eldest and only surviving son of the late Alexander Deans, Esq., of Huntington, Mid Lothian.



You can imagine the shock and consternation this all caused in the Curtis/Carter household in New York. Thomas was now 77 years of age and his recently engaged daughter was 48. I wonder if Thomas had to do some explaining to Fanny jnr? Yet it appears the story was already known in his family. From the newspaper articles that follow, it seems they had stayed in touch with at least one of the Heighington's in England.

The New York press would have loved the story of an adopted waif, growing up and never knowing her real family and suddenly coming into an untold fortune. They wrote it up in grand gushing style, as per this transcript from the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* on 10 October, headlined at left:

Out of the wealth of romance and gold that fills the English Chancery there has come across the seas to Brooklyn both gold and a romance. At least, the romance is already here and the gold is soon to follow after. An old, almost forgotten name, that she had never borne, is to bring the good fortune to Mrs Fanny Hopper, adopted daughter of Thomas Curtis, the aged bowler, who has been one of the greatest figures to Brooklyn athletics.

Mrs Hopper left last week for London to claim the fortune that is hers because she was born a Heighington. She has never known herself as a Heighington, for she was but a baby, 5 days old, when she was adopted by her uncle, Thomas Curtis and given his name.

Since she was a baby and, in fact, long before, the fortune has been lying in Chancery, but Mrs Hopper had no hope of ever getting a single cent. It was the biggest surprise in her life when she learned that the money was at last to be freed from Chancery.

An interesting feature of this romance is that Mrs Hoppers friends have had whispered to them that she is soon to marry one of Brooklyn's wealthy and prominent physicians. It is said that the plan is that he shall join her abroad and marry her there, where her father and mother were married.

It was the marriage of her father and mother that tied up in Chancery the fortune that is now to come to her and to her brother.

Brother and sister separated for thirty-nine years.

She has never seen or heard from her brother in the thirty-nine years of her life, but a letter came from him to her this morning at the Curtis home, 480 Clinton Avenue. It was a long letter and full of information about the brother. It will be forwarded to her in England. A cable message has been sent to her brother, Thomas Heighington, and asking him to meet the Phoenicia, which is carrying Mrs Hopper to England. That will be the first meeting of the brother and sister who are to share the fortune that was shut away from them by their mother's marriage.

The mother was Emily Elizabeth Pitt, heir to a large fortune. She was a ward in chancery when she fell in love with Thomas Heighington, descendent of the famous Sir William Heighington, of Heighington Court, County Durham. She married Heighington without the consent of the Lord Chancellor, and this resulted in complications that tied up the fortune.

Thomas Heighington owned a large sugar plantation in Jamaica, West Indies. He was independently wealthy, and told his wife that the Chancery might keep the fortune for all he cared. They went to the West Indies to live and were very happy there. After a few years they returned to England for two years. Just before they returned to the West Indies little Fanny was born. She was a delicate baby and her parents were afraid to take her to the hot climate of Jamaica. Thomas Curtis and his wife, who were then living in London, wanted the child and, with its parents' consent, they adopted Fanny as their own. The next year they came to Brooklyn with the baby.

Thomas, Fanny's brother, was born later and, after his father's death, was

adopted by another uncle in London. In the old days, thirty-five years ago communication was not so easy as now and it happened that Thomas Curtis never heard again from Fanny's parents.

After Fanny grew up Mrs Curtis used to tell her of her mother and father and of the fortune in Chancery. Fanny came to regard the fortune more as myth than anything else. She would laugh when Mrs Curtis would say 'Fanny, you will get your fortune out of Chancery some day, and we will all be rich.'

Fanny Curtis married when still a young girl and she has a son, George Hopper, who is now about of age. He is in the electrical business and is prominent in the Bergen Beach Yacht Club.

News of the fortune comes to America

The first intimation Mrs Hopper had of her fortune came ten days ago, when a relative sent her the public notice [See above 'Pursuant to an order...'] in various London papers.

Mrs Hopper goes to London to claim fortune.

Mrs Hopper did not know the value of the estate, so she cabled Registrar Taylor and asked him if it would be worth her while to go over to London. 'Most decidedly', Taylor cabled in reply.

Mrs Hopper left immediately and took with her all the necessary legal papers to prove her claim. When she left she had no idea whether her brother was alive. She knew nothing of her parents, whether they were alive or dead, or what had become of the estate in the West Indies.

This morning Mr Curtis received the letter from Thomas Heighington. He had secured his sister's address from a distant relative. He wrote that he had not corresponded with his mother for many years, but knew that she had died recently. He said she married again after his father's death. He included the following notice from a London newspaper concerning the fortune in Chancery:

Mr Thomas Heighington, chemist and druggist, manager of the drug department of Harrod's stores, has just had a romantic stroke of fortune. An advertisement recently appeared in the Times and other newspapers in regard to the children of Mr Thomas Heighington and his wife Emily Elizabeth Pitt. Mr Heighington happened to be in Germany when the advertisement appeared and on returning found a big pile of letters to answer about the matter. He is the only son of the marriage and has a sister. The romance of the matter lies in the fact that his father, a sugar planter in the West Indies, married his mother whilst she was a ward in Chancery, and her money has been in the Court of Chancery in the County Palatine², of Lancaster, for at least fifty years. Mr Heighington was sent to England before he was 2 years old and was brought up by an uncle. After his father's death, when he was a child, his mother married again, so that he has not seen her since he was a boy, and it is now assumed she is dead. Mr

² In England, Wales and Ireland a county palatine or palatinate was an area ruled by a hereditary nobleman enjoying special authority and autonomy from the rest of a kingdom.

Heighington is the only male Heighington in England. The family goes back to Sir William Heighington, Bart³, of Heighington County, Durham, who built the parish church over a century ago. Mr Heighington and his sister will share their mother's fortune, the amount of which has yet to be ascertained.

Brooklyn Citizen, 4 October 1904

Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 27 November 1904

GOES TO CLAIM ESTATE.

Mrs. Fannie H. Hopper Sails for England—Father's Property Was Left in Trust.

Mrs. Fannie H. Hopper, the adopted daughter of Thomas Curtis, of No. 480 Clinton avenue, sailed for Liverpool, Eng., yesterday, on the steamship Phenicia, having been notified by F. Willis Taylor, Registrar of the Chancery of the County of Lancaster, that a trust estate exists in which she may be interested. Mrs. Hopper claims to be the daughter of Thomas Heighington and Emily Elizabeth, his wife, and was brought to this country about 1855 by her brother-in-law, Thomas Curtis, whose wife was Fannie's sister. Mr. Curtis says that he and his wife were married in Woburn, Bedfordshire, Eng., on Jan. 3, 1853. Mrs. Hopper had a brother named Thomas who was last heard of in Liverpool in 1880. He is said to have been a chemist's assistant. Mrs. Thomas Curtis, Mrs. Hopper's sister and adoptive mother, died a year ago last March. Mrs. Hopper, who is nearly fifty years old, has one child, George Hopper, aged 22. She and her son have been living for some time with Mr. Curtis at the Clinton avenue address. Mr. Curtis, who is 77 years of age, is manager of the Superba bowling alleys at Franklin avenue and Fulton street.

He says that the litigation in which his adopted daughter is interested began nearly fifty years ago, and covers, so far as he can learn, considerable property, but of what nature he is unable to say. It is known, however, to involve a trust deed, made between Thomas Heighington and Emily Elizabeth, his wife, in 1856. Mr. Heighington died in 1880. His wife died only recently.

GETS FORTUNE AND HUSBAND.

Mrs. Fanny Heighington Hopper Comes Back From London a Bride, and Rich.

The steamship Meserba, which will arrive from London to-day, will bring back as bride, Mrs. Fanny Heighington Hopper, who went to Europe a few weeks ago to get a fortune out of Chancery. Mrs. Hopper returns with both the fortune and a husband; at least she has the husband already and will get the fortune as soon as the courts arrange certain formalities.

Leaving Brooklyn as Mrs. Hopper, she returns as Mrs. David Offley. She was married to Mr. Offley in London, November 7. After a ten days stay in Europe they started home. They will be at home to their friends at 480 Clinton avenue, Thursday, December 15, from 8:30 to 10:30.

The marriage in London did not surprise the intimate friends of Mrs. Hopper's family. They knew that she and Mr. Offley were to marry, but did not know that the wedding would take place abroad. It was by the accidental discovery of her fortune in Chancery that the wedding happened in London, instead of Brooklyn. Mr. Offley followed her over when she went to see about the money, and they decided to marry there, where her father and mother were married, and where her brother now lives.

Mrs. Offley is the adopted daughter of Thomas Curtis, the bowling expert. She is his niece, and was taken into his family when a very small child. Her brother, in London, was adopted by another uncle, and the brother and sister never saw each other until a few weeks ago. Mrs. Hopper did not know that she had a brother living until inquiry was instituted for the heirs of Thomas Heighington.

The Heighington fortune was tied up in Chancery because Mrs. Hopper's mother married without the consent of the lord chancellor, while she was a ward in Chancery. There was considerable litigation, but the Heighingtons could never get the money.

³ A member of a British hereditary order of honor, ranking below the barons and made up of commoners, designated by Sir before the name and Baronet.

MARRIED ACROSS THE SEA.

**David Offley Follows Mrs. Hopper,
Who Went to Claim a Fortune.**

Mrs. Fannie Heighington Hopper, who sailed for Europe six weeks ago to establish her claim to a large fortune, returned yesterday as Mrs. David Offley. The news of the wedding was received a few days prior to her sailing for home, and caused much surprise in society in the Bedford section. Mr. Offley is a commission merchant in Manhattan. Just before Mrs. Hopper went abroad he became engaged to her. The wedding was to have been celebrated in Brooklyn this fall.

Believing that a trip would improve his health Mr. Offley followed the young widow across the sea, and they were wedded in London.

Mrs. Offley was taken when an infant into the family of her uncle, Thomas Curtis, bowling expert, who adopted her. Her brother was sent to another relative. The brother and sister were unaware of each other's whereabouts until two months ago, when the brother received from Thomas Heighington a letter inquiring if he had a sister living. Brother and sister met at the pier in Liverpool and fully established their claim to the fortune before the Court of Chancery in London.

The Heighington fortune was tied up in Chancery because Mrs. Hopper's mother married without the consent of the Lord Chancellor when she was still a ward in Chancery.

Mr. and Mrs. Offley will live at the bride's home, No. 480 Clinton avenue.

Mrs. Fannie Heighington Hopper, who sailed for England six months ago to establish her claim to a fortune held in Chancery, has returned as Mrs. David Offley. Mr. Offley, who is a Manhattan business man, joined his fiancée abroad, and they were married in London, Nov. 7. Mrs. Offley was taken when an infant into the family of her uncle, Thomas Curtis, bowling expert, who adopted her. Her brother was sent to another relative. The brother and sister were unaware of each other's whereabouts until two months ago, when the brother received from Thomas Heighington a letter inquiring if he had a sister living. Brother and sister met at the pier in Liverpool and fully established their claim to the fortune before the Court of Chancery in London. The Heighington fortune was tied up in Chancery because Mrs. Hopper's mother married without the consent of the Lord Chancellor when she was still a ward in Chancery. Mr. and Mrs. Offley will live at the bride's old home on Clinton avenue.

There is a lot to unpack here as I do not know what, if any, of this information was directly from Thomas or his daughter, so can it be really trusted anyway? Certainly if someone was travelling back from Jamaica, then Fanny jnr's birthplace of 'In the Bay of Biscay' on the 1861 census could be explained, but the living in London connection seems to be a fabrication.

I cannot find any records of the case at the British National Archives, but Chancery records of the 20th century were so

voluminous that only samples were kept and the rest destroyed. Therefore there is no evidence that Fanny jnr was even able to prove her claim to the monies, or how much it entailed if she did. Leaving England with 'certain formalities to be arranged' seems a little odd.

UK records show that Fanny Heighington Hopper had indeed married David Offley, in Liverpool while in England, but there are no news reports associated with it. I would have thought a story such as theirs would have garnered great interest in England, but there was not a word of it.

The *Brooklyn Standard Union* above paints a picture of separated siblings being reunited on the Liverpool dockside as she arrived in England. But as they had the time frame she had been in London wrong and marriage venue wrong, I do not know how much they had right!

According to the 1905 U.S. census, the family were still in Clinton Avenue, Kings, Brooklyn, New York, so the inheritance (if there were any) had not bought them a bigger or better home. Mr Curtis still lived with his daughter Fanny and son-in-law David Offley.

480 Clinton Ave.	Handley Delia	Servant	W	F	23	Ireland	2.00	Servant	
	Offley Fannie	Head	W	F	40	United States	00	Boarding House	00
	Offley David	Husband	W	M	44	United States	00	X	
	Curtis Mr	Saddler	W	M	73	United States	00	Mgr Bowling Alley	00
	Gardner Mary	Boarder	W	F	30	United States	00	X	
	George	Boarder	W	M	35	United States	00	Salesman Drugs	00
	Merkley William	Boarder	W	M	34	United States	00	Doctor	00
	Mary	Boarder	W	F	32	United States	00	X	
	Stanley John	Boarder	W	M	28	United States	00	Insurer in Agri	00
	Chapman John	Boarder	W	M	29	United States	00	Bookkeeper	00
	Herring Peter	Boarder	W	M	27	United States	00	Clerk Telephone	00
	McAtkins Elizabeth	Servant	W	F	26	United States	00	Servant	00

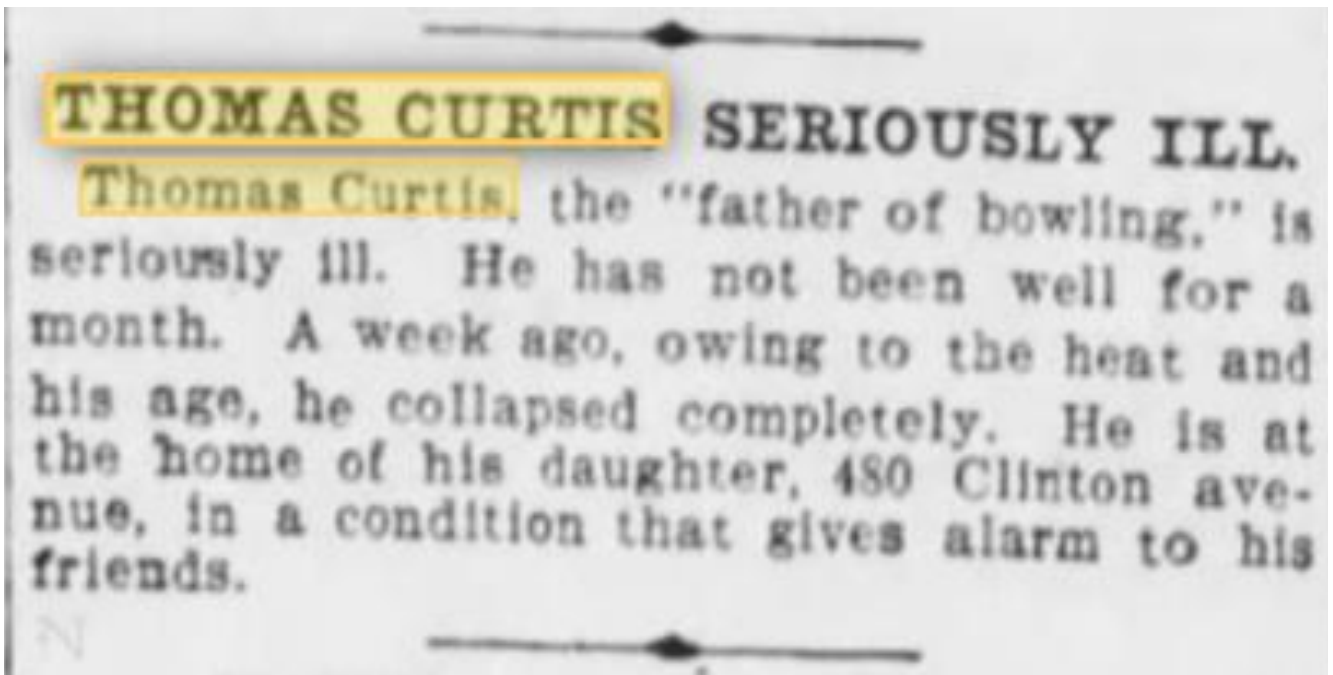
1905 U.S. Census, Kings, Brooklyn:

- Offley Fannie, 40, [Nationality] United States, Boarding House
- Offley David, 44, United States
- Curtis Mr, 73, United States, Mgr Bowling Alley

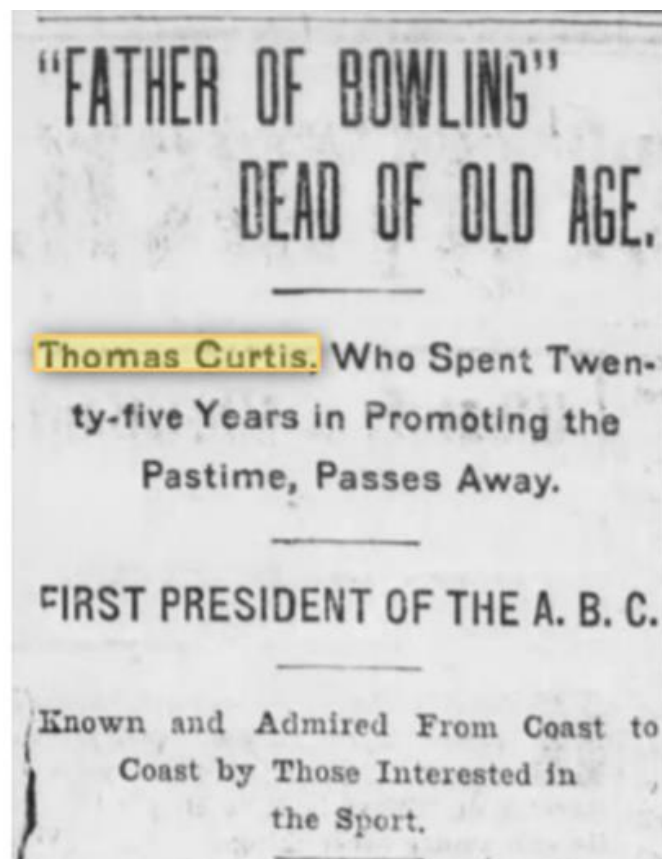
Clinton Court, below, stands at 480 Clinton Avenue but I do not know if that is the original building on the site.



Thomas Gordon Heighington certainly continued to work as a chemist, but not at Harrods as he was the licencee appointed in May 1905 for a wine off-licence (selling for medicinal properties I presume?) at the shop of S F Goss, chemists at 17 Brompton Road, Chelsea.



When Thomas Curtis became ill and died the next year in 1905, we find out much more about his life in America, or at least what he wanted us to know. All three of these reports from the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, the illness notification above from 16 August 1905, then when he passed away this extensive life-story on 21 August:



Thomas Curtis, the venerable bowler who has been recognized from coast to coast as the father of the sport, died yesterday afternoon at St. Mary's Hospital of general debility due to old age. He was 78 years old on January 3 last and had been a resident of Brooklyn for twenty years, coming here from Paterson, N. J., where he settled nearly half a century ago after arriving from England, where he was born. The funeral serv-

ices will be held to-morrow evening at 8 o'clock at the residence of his daughter, Mrs. Offeld, 480 Clinton avenue. Many prominent bowlers in Greater New York will attend.

Mr. Curtis up to the time of his death was probably the oldest active bowler in the country, being manager of the Superba alleys and secretary of the Echo Bowling Club, which he organized twenty years ago. Originally Mr. Curtis was a commercial traveler and as such visited nearly every city in the country east of the Rockies. In the course of his travels he became acquainted with the great winter sport and when he finally retired from the commercial business took up the sport in earnest. He organized several clubs at Paterson and when he moved to Brooklyn was a firm believer in the possibilities of the game. He organized the Echo Club, when bowling alleys were exceedingly scarce in this borough and it was a source of pride to him that he had the first bowling item printed in the Eagle.

Mr. Curtis became associated with T. C. Carruthers at the Elephant Club alleys back in the eighties and organized the first bowling tournament in the borough at that place. Tournament play at that time was confined to Manhattan, but the inception of the Carruthers national marked the beginning of a boom in the pastime, which has attracted the attention of the entire bowling world and was really the beginning of the

growth of the sport in the United States.

Early in the nineties, Mr. Curtis conceived the idea of forming a national organization to control the sport, prepare uniform rules and maintain its purity, with the result that the American Bowling Congress was organized in this borough with the veteran as president. It was through this that he became known as the "Father of Bowling," for the organization increased and spread from a paltry six clubs confined to the neighborhood of New York, until it covered the entire country and represented more than a million bowlers.

Three years ago Mr. Curtis celebrated his seventy-fifth birthday, and also his golden wedding anniversary, Mrs. Curtis being then in fair health, although she died shortly after. At that time, the bowlers of the country rallied to the call of a testimonial to the Father of Bowling, which resulted in a handsome contribution, making the veteran practically independent, although he could not relinquish his interest in the game, as the members of the Royal Arcanum Leagues will testify.

Mr. Curtis was much admired by all with whom he came in contact, and made many firm friends in all walks of life, through his connection with the sport, which he always maintained was a gentleman's game. He wrote fluently on the subject and his remarks were widely read. His career as a bowler, as told by himself, appeared in the Eagle of December 28, 1902, and is, in part, as follows:

"I first took up the game of tenpins in the summer of 1870 when on the road as a commercial traveler. I took a week's vacation at Put-in-Bay, on Lake Erie, stopping at the Beeby House with some friend from Cincinnati. We found a bowling alley, which was a rather crude affair, three feet wide and fifty feet long. The pins were eighteen inches high and the balls all sizes, from twenty to thirty inches in circumference, without any holes for the fingers. You placed the ball in the palm of the hand, rolling it slowly. If it remained on the alley and reached the head pin the ten pins would go down sure. The difficulty was to keep the ball on the alley the whole fifty feet. At least five times out of ten it would roll in the gutter.

"Nothing was said about strikes or spares. You were allowed to roll thirty balls to a game, the pins being set up after each ball, the number of pins knocked down to count. So if you knocked down all the pins each time, you could make a total of 300. The dead wood was left on the alley and if a pin lay across the gutter and the corner pin was standing you would roll the ball down the gutter instead of on the alley to make sure of it. It took twenty or thirty minutes for two persons to roll a game, so it was not very profitable for the alley owner.

"I spent fifteen years on the road, visiting all the large cities in the United States and Canada, but found very few bowling alleys. I found some in Boston and a few in Chicago, but they were not at all first class in either place. I retired from the road in 1877, returning to my home in Paterson, N. J. Here I found a bowling club, the Germania. It had run down and the first night I joined it I was elected secretary. I furnished the scores each week to the two daily papers, the Paterson Press and Guardian. Soon an interest was taken in bowling and more alleys were built. I organized first the Excelsior, and then the Pin Knight Club.

"The first bowling paper, I remember, was the National Bowler, edited by David McCausland, printed in the Brooklyn Times Building, for which I corresponded. Through that paper came a series of match games between the Germania Club, of Paterson, and the Germania Club, of Brooklyn, who had their alleys in Germania Hall, Franklin street, Greenpoint. We had several home and home games. At this time, ten men team matches were very popular and I look back with pleasure to the fine times we had with the Germanians, of Greenpoint; the Montgomerys, of Newark, and the Goode-noughs, of Harlem.

"I think it was about 1875 or 1876 that the first rules for bowling were adopted. They were called the National Bowling Rules, which we amended in 1880. Ten men team matches were most popular at that time. Grote, in Fourteenth street, was the largest manufacturer and he offered a prize for a tournament. The late W. J. Pell materially assisted in getting up this, the first ten men team tournament. It was rolled on different alleys.

"After this came the first five men team tournament, called the Pomroy tournament. W. J. Pell, Mike Magoris and others who took part have passed away, and still others are not now bowling. I acted as secretary for two years.

"I came to Brooklyn in 1884, and found that most of the alleys were located in the Eastern District. We organized the Echo Club on May 4, 1884, at my residence, 200 Sixth avenue. After forming the club the next thing was to find an alley. At that time we could find only one south of Flatbush avenue. This was the old Turn Hall, Fifth street, near Fifth avenue, where we rolled our first games.

"Since then bowling has grown wonderfully here, and I attribute this entirely to the power of the press. When I came to Brooklyn the only daily paper printing scores was the Brooklyn Times, whose circulation was confined almost exclusively to the Eastern District. I made up my mind that the only way to make bowling popular was to get the press interested. I visited the Brooklyn Daily Eagle and gained its consent to publish the bowling news if I furnished it.

"I think the first bowling news printed in the Brooklyn Daily Eagle was the first monthly report of the Echo Club. From that time on bowling made rapid strides. Bowling alleys were put up in all the private clubs and in all parts of the city. Where there

was only one alley south of Flatbush avenue in 1884 there are now not less than fifty. Where there were not more than seven pairs of alleys in Fulton street and vicinity there are now nearly, if not quite, one hundred.

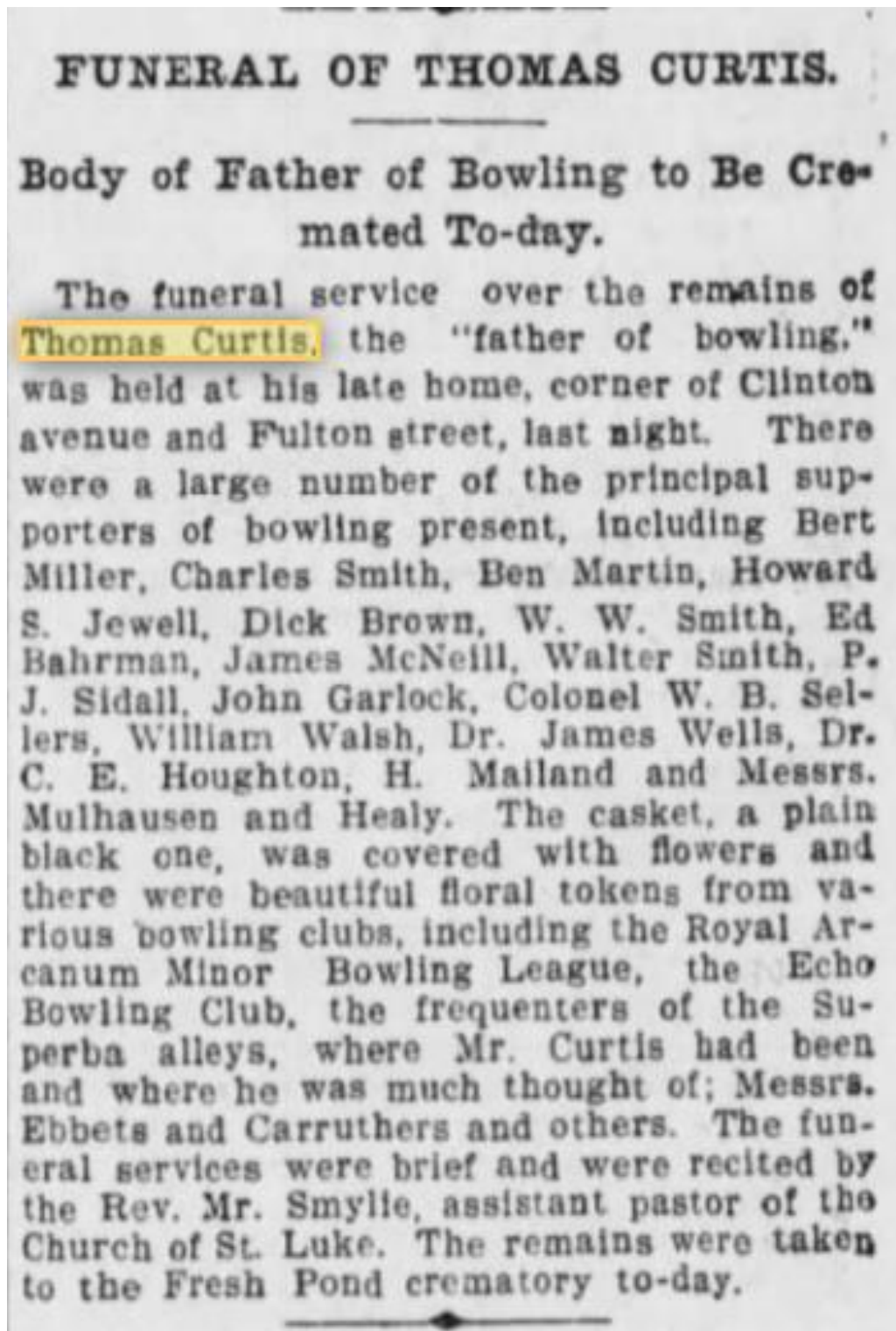
"It was not until the winter of 1888, that the first five men team tournament was held in Brooklyn. I wrote to T. C. Carruthers suggesting a tournament at the Elephant Club. He came to my office with the late Clarence Dickerson and I referred them to W. J. Pell. The result was an organization with eight clubs. The Echoes had been competing at Pomroy's for two years then, and placed two teams in Carruthers'. The others were from the Crescent Club, Brooklyn A. A., Madison, Monroe, Ours and Waverly. The scores rolled would be considered low now, \$99 being considered high. Only four bowlers who took part in that tournament are bowling in public to-day. They are Colonel Sellers, J. L. Martin, E. Lovell and Andy Lee, all prominent Arcanumites.

"The progress of the game during the past ten years is well known to its votaries. The rise of the Amateur Bowling Union, in 1892, and its subsequent demise owing to its exclusiveness and its attempt to declare expert bowlers professionals, came quickly. Then followed the organization of the American Bowling Congress, of which I was the first president and which has brought the sport up to its present position as the greatest of all winter pastimes. I flattered myself that I have played an important part in the evolution of the game and am certain that it will continue its hold on the people, as it cannot be excelled as a promoter of social intercourse and as a health giving pastime."

Of his home life at the time, Mr. Curtis said: "My wife and I were young people together when I was 15, so we have known each other sixty years. We have had the usual ups and downs of life that those usually have who work for a living. We are now comfortable and feel very grateful for the many blessings we enjoy."

In this connection, a bit of romance may be cited. Mr. and Mrs. Curtis had no children, but they adopted the daughter of relatives who is now Mrs. Offeld. She was left with Mr. and Mrs. Curtis by her parents who had gone to England on a visit from Jamaica and after their departure were not heard from again. Last year, Mrs. Offeld, then Mrs. Hopper, went to England and secured her share of her parents' estate, which had been in chancery for many years. She became Mrs. Offeld after the award of the English courts had been announced.

Finally, a funeral report from 23 August:



I found the picture on the following page of him online, from a souvenir booklet for a bowling tournament he had arranged in 1895, while he was manager of the Elephant Bowling Club at 1409-1411 Fulton Street:



The next census of 1910 shows just Fanny and David Offley in their household. They continued living in New York and were listed living in Gates Avenue, Brooklyn, in 1930. David Offley died on 23 August 1934. A small obituary appeared in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* the next day and then Fanny Offley died on 8 March 1935. A similar obituary appeared the next day in the same local paper. George Heighington Hopper, her son from her first marriage, died in 1937. Fanny's brother Thomas Gordon Heighington died in Wandsworth aged 82 in June 1939.

David Offley

David Offley, 80, of 438 Classon Ave., formerly for a number of years associated with Parke Davis & Co., died suddenly yesterday of complications. He was born in Smyrna, Turkey, where his father was American Consul, in 1854. He is survived by his widow, Fannie Heighington Hopper Offley; a stepson, George H. Hopper of Mountain View, N. J., and two nieces. Services will be held at the Fresh Pond Crematory this afternoon.

OFFLEY—FANNIE, on Friday, March 8, 1935, widow of David Offley and beloved mother of George H. Hopper of Mountain View, N. J. Funeral services at her residence, 438 Classon Ave., Brooklyn, Sunday afternoon, at 4:30 o'clock.

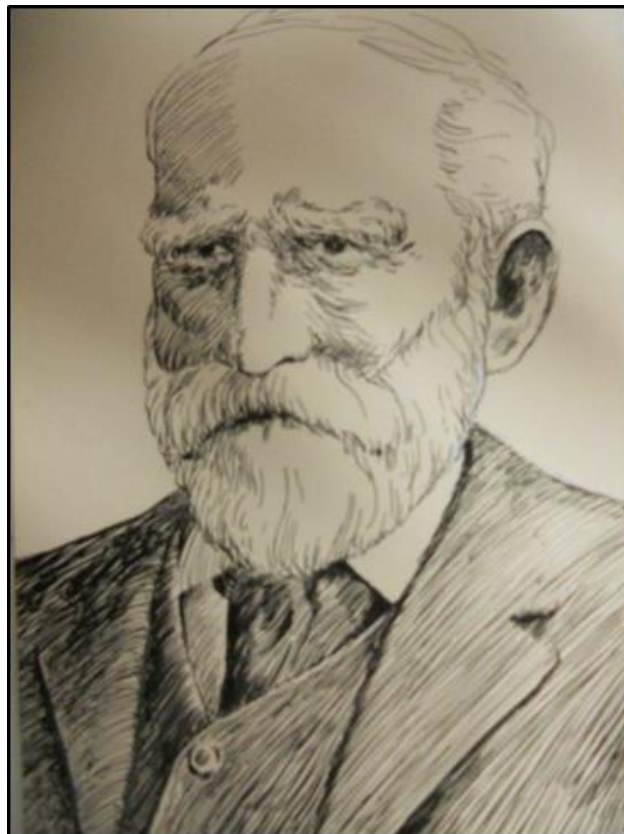
Thomas Curtis was eventually inducted into the United States Bowling Congress 'Hall of Fame' in 1993 as a Pioneer of the sport. He had served as the organisation's first president. The citation reads:

Generally regarded as the Father of Bowling, Curtis was elected as the first ABC President in 1895. He was hailed as the originator of the tournament concept in the 1880s and was involved in center management and ownership. Even before ABC was organized, Curtis was credited with writing the first set of bowling rules in 1875.

From the Facebook Tenpin Bowling page:

Thomas Curtis. Often called, 'The Father of Tenpins', the visionary Curtis was instrumental in professionalizing and popularizing the game. As secretary of the United Bowling Clubs, he planned many of the organization's competitions and tournaments - including its first international tournament in 1900. Curtis lobbied the New York City and New Jersey press to cover the game, believing that newspaper coverage was the best way to create public interest. He became the first president of the American Bowling Congress in 1895.

Thomas Curtis/Carter is seen here in a drawing celebrating his presidency, which now resides in the American Bowling museum's collection.



As far as I am aware, no-one has ever connected Thomas Curtis to being Thomas Carter, the bankrupt grocer of Woburn, England. It may be this is the first time outside of him and his wife that the full story is known. My thanks again to the BFHS for providing the link to America to solve the puzzle and what a great collaboration this was between Local and Family history research. □

OUR MEETINGS AT MARK RUTHERFORD SCHOOL

Our monthly Friday night meetings offer members instructive, interesting, and often amusing talks on subjects that fascinate all interested in history and genealogy in general, and are usually particularly relevant to those with a Bedfordshire heritage. We look forward to seeing you in person.

Where possible, talks held at the school will be live streamed (Zoom log-in details are shown in the members' portal) or made available later as a video recording on the website in the members' portal, subject to approval by the speaker.

The address of the venue is Mark Rutherford School, Wentworth Drive, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK41 8PX.



VICTORIAN WORKHOUSES - THE PROBLEM WITH THE POOR

Katrina Friess

Were you unable to attend the talk given by Katrina Friess to the Society on 5 January at Mark Rutherford school, or use Zoom to join the live audience, or catch up by viewing the talk through the Members' Portal of our website? If you missed out, Katrina has kindly provided the summary below of her talk.

Rather than just talk exclusively about the Victorian workhouse, I wanted to put the workhouse into its social and historical context. How were the poor cared for before the New Poor Law of 1834 and how have they been cared for since the inauguration of the NHS and Welfare State? Is any one system better than another? Have attitudes towards caring for the poor actually changed over time?

PRE THE NEW POOR LAW

Towns and villages were smaller and the elderly, sick and disabled were generally cared for by family and other villagers. When their needs could not be met at that level, the Church would step in to provide parish relief.

The poor who were at a level of needing help were divided into two categories - the 'deserving' poor - who were genuinely destitute elderly, infirm, children or lunatics unable to provide for themselves and their families for whatever reason and the 'undeserving' poor - those who could work, but chose not to and who were simply idle. The latter would be blamed for any local crimes and troubles, whether or not they were actually guilty. Beggars and vagrants were not tolerated and could be whipped, branded or even hung.

Finances for the poor relief were gleaned from local landowners and gentry on an almost voluntary basis, determined by their individual circumstances. The system was open to variation, for example some overseers gave the landowners the opportunity to employ the local unemployed and pay a subsidised wage rather than their poor rate. Having to pay out for the poor was very much resented and the overseers were tasked with making sure that every precious penny was wisely and frugally bestowed where it was most needed.

Many parishes had a house of industry - a place where the unemployed could be sent to do genuine work and receive a wage rather than claim parish relief. This was a forerunner to the actual workhouse.

THE NEW POOR LAW AND THE VICTORIAN WORKHOUSE

By the 1830s the population - and therefore the number of poor - had increased significantly and it was clear that the system of caring for them needed to be updated. Workhouses and parish relief, now called out-relief, was still funded by the local collection of the poor rate. The central government did not contribute.

The workhouse was designed and determined to be an absolute last resort, certainly not the easy option when things got a bit tough. The stigma was deliberately created and encouraged. In fact, whilst they were not the filthy, prison-like institutions they are often portrayed to be, they were a place of strict regime and rules, hard work and separation from family. Only elderly couples were allowed to stay together and, depending on the workhouse, would either have their own bedroom or may even have

their own little cottage. Children were kept separate during the day and mealtimes but were allowed to sleep with their mothers until they were about 7 or 8 and after that they would be apprenticed out to learn a trade to break the poverty cycle. During the day the children were schooled - something they would not have had access to outside of the workhouse. Food was basic and minimal - but so was it outside the workhouse! As time moved on and understanding of nutrition etc grew, the diet improved and by the early 1900s an inmate could look forward to tucking into a shepherd's pie followed by a roly-poly pudding!

THE NHS AND WELFARE STATE

Now the care for the sick and poor has been nationalised and standardised. We no longer have a melting pot for all needs and circumstances, there are separate provisions for mental and physical health, foster care, old peoples' homes and so on. There are also standardised benefits for anyone needing to claim financial assistance. Although healthcare is free, it is still funded by the collection of rates that also get used to cover other services as well.

Rather than instantly close down all workhouses, many continued as old peoples' homes, children's homes or hospitals but the stigma remained, especially for the old people, and eventually they were phased out and by the 1970s the elderly residents were able to enjoy a room to themselves, rather than a dormitory, and the comforts of the modern residential care home.

RESEARCH

If you would like to learn more about workhouses in general or a specific workhouse, then one of the best websites to visit is **workhouses.org**. Records for the Bedford Union Workhouse are on **ancestry.co.uk**. In my talk I also mentioned James Greenwood and his innovative undercover stay in a casual ward. A fascinating composite of his 1866 articles can be found at workhouses.org.uk/Greenwood/1866/index.shtml and obviously there is always our good friend Google to help find old pictures and any other information.

REMINDER

The CLOSING DATE for articles to be published in the
June 2024 *Journal* is **30 April 2024**.

(Articles submitted near the closing date may not
be published until the following *Journal*)

THE FRONT COVER ILLUSTRATION

This is one of those ‘gentlemen’s houses’ in the Georgian style ‘dignified and stately’, of which Woburn presents several admirable specimens. Like most of its fellows this house has a history. It was formerly a school, and in 1811 the master was a famous scholar – Jeremiah Holmes WIFFEN, a Woburn boy, whose father kept an ironmonger’s business where the War Memorial now stands. In 1821 he left the school and became librarian at Woburn Abbey for John, 6th Duke of Bedford, and removed to Foxfield House. Among his outstanding works were ‘Memories of the House of Russell’, published in 1833; and a translation of “Gerusalemme” by the Italian poet Tasso. He died in 1836 and is buried in the Friends’ Corner at Woburn Sands. His younger brother, Benjamin, became an ecclesiastical biographer, and also translated many Spanish works. He died in 1867, and also rests in the Friends’ Corner.

This illustration and text are taken from *Our Heritage: A Bedfordshire Sketch Book* drawings by G Alan Fortescue FRIBA, notes by *Touchstone*, published 1943. □

THE FRONT COVER ILLUSTRATION AS IT IS TODAY

Paul Woodcraft



Once again, I find myself in Woburn on a cold January morning looking for A Gentleman’s House -18th Century. This was no hardship as I love both Woburn and its Architecture. It was not long, when walking up Leighton Street, that I found what I was looking for, the house being the subject of this issue of our Journal.

As you can see nothing has changed, only the small gate and large bush to the left of the house have gone. Almost a perfect Georgian style house set in a most beautiful rural area. As I have said before well worth a visit. □

WHY NOT WRITE SOMETHING FOR THE JOURNAL?

We are always on the lookout for contributions to the *Journal*, any size, short or long. To give you some idea, a *Journal* page takes around 450 words to fill. We would also welcome items shorter than a page. You might feel more comfortable writing a letter or email on a topic and this would be included in a 'Letters' page in the *Journal*.

No need to worry if you are not used to writing, we are here to help. Seeing your own work in print can feel like a real achievement and others will appreciate your effort. Simply writing down your 'brick wall' can help you see the problem more clearly and, you never know, someone reading it may be able to help you move forward.

A great way to start is to take a small part of your family tree and describe the main characters, where and when they lived and died, and any stumbling blocks you encountered in researching their history, such as name changes or document transcription errors. Photographs of those in your family history add colour to the story as do copies of documents that acted as your source material.

If you need ideas to get you going or would like to discuss your ideas, please send an email to journal@bfhs.org.uk.

DO WE HAVE YOUR CURRENT EMAIL ADDRESS?

We notify our members via email about any zoom/hybrid meetings; however, some get bounced back and for some members we do not have an email address. If you have not been receiving these emails from us it means that we do not have your email address, or the email address we have is incorrect or your mailbox is full.

If you have an email address but are not getting our emails but would like to do so, please send your current email address to treasurer@bfhs.org.uk

Peter Sharp, Treasurer



Bedfordshire Genealogy, Family and House History

Specialists in genealogy, family and house history research in
Bedfordshire.

Our lead researcher is Vicki Manners a qualified genealogist who is a member of the Register of Qualified Genealogists and an associate member of **AGRA**.

Her qualifications include:

- M.A. in Local History
- P.G. Cert. in Family and Local History
- P.G. Dip. in Archive Management

Vicki has worked for Bedfordshire Archives, The Panacea Museum, and several other heritage organisations in Bedfordshire thus giving her a unique and specialist knowledge of genealogy, family and house history records relating to Bedfordshire.

Vicki also specialises in genetic genealogy. She can therefore advise you on which tests are most suitable for your research aims, as well as help you interpret to your DNA results and matches.

We offer a free, no obligation initial consultation. To find out more telephone: 07976 718624.

bedfordshireresearch.co.uk

BEDFORDSHIRE HERITAGE TEA TOWELS

The Society has had a supply of Bedfordshire Heritage tea towels printed and these are now being sold to raise funds.

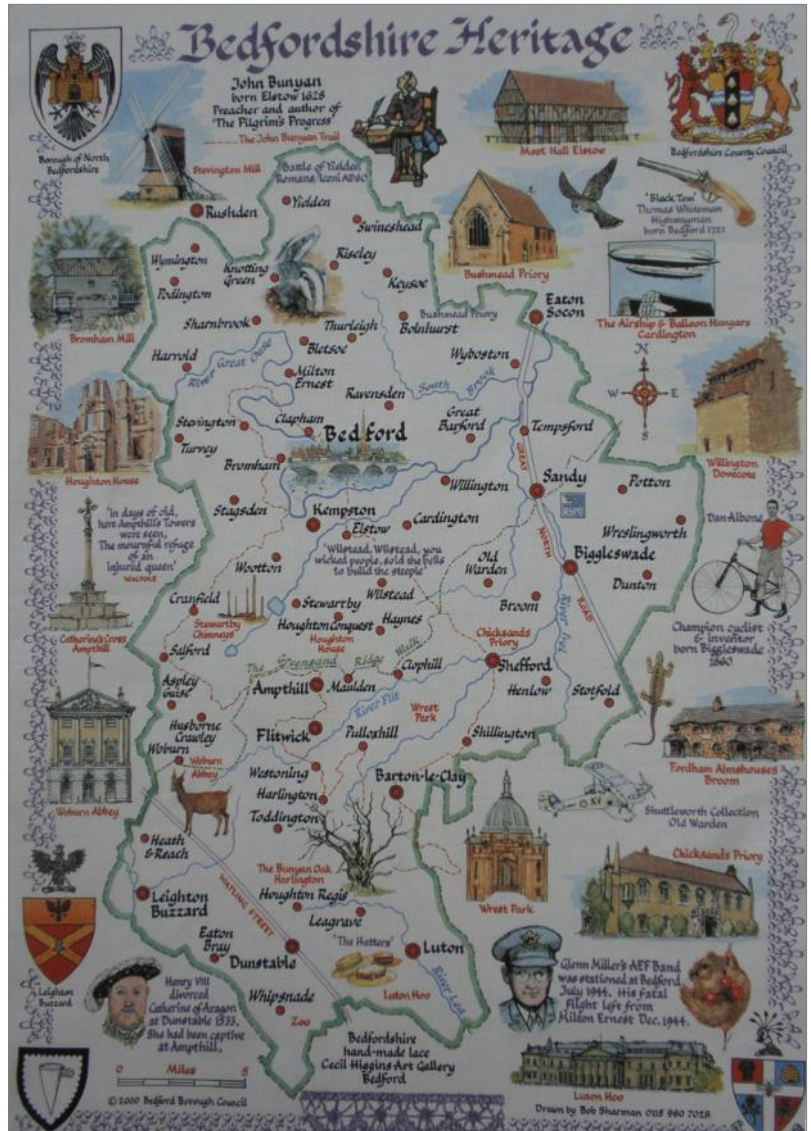
These tea towels are really too nice to use for drying up; they are beautifully colour printed with some famous Bedfordshire landmarks forming a border for the County map. Even if you do not have any Bedfordshire ancestors they make ideal gifts.

They are 100% cotton and at £4.50 each can be obtained from the bookstall at members' meetings, by email to Lynn Manning at:

secretary@bfhs.org.uk,

or by post to Lynn at:

38 Risborough Road, Bedford, MK41 9QW, Tel. 01234 306482.



For UK orders please add **postage and packing** as follows:

Up to 2 tea towels add	£2.00
3 to 6 tea towels add	£3.00

For orders from outside the UK please enquire before ordering. Cheques should be made payable to Bedfordshire Family History Society.



We've joined Twitter!
Come and say hello.

We take part in #ancestryhour each
Tuesday evening, 7-8pm

www.twitter.com/BedsFHS



DATES FOR YOUR 2024 DIARY



**LIVE
in 2024**

Saturday 20 April

10am-4pm

Burgess Hall, St Ives, Cambs PE27 6WU

Featuring.....

Family History Societies

from the East Anglia region and surrounding counties,

local groups and commercial stands

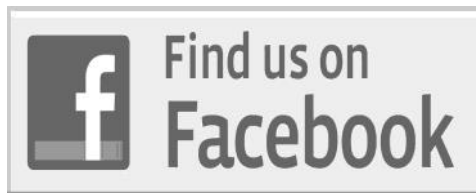
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www.fhf-reallyuseful.com



Bedfordshire Family History Society has a presence on Facebook for news and discussions. Visit:

facebook.com/BedfordshireFamilyHistorySociety

BEDFORDSHIRE PARISH REGISTERS

Many new computers do not have CD drives so we are pleased to announce that all our CDs are now available for sale as downloads from Parish Chest and Genfair.

The available downloads include all 128 Bedfordshire Parish Registers, Bedfordshire Nonconformist Registers, Marriage Licences, Poor Law papers, BFHS back Journals Vol 1-19 with an index to surnames and subjects, and the four Bedfordshire Will books. BFHS Journals volumes 20-24 are available free in the Members' Portal of the BFHS website.

To access the stores directly please visit **parishchest.com** or **genfair.co.uk**, although the simplest way of accessing a BFHS download is to visit our website bfhs.org.uk then select 'Online Stores'. If you then select Parish Chest the majority of the downloads are to be found in the 'Downloads' folder, but Poor Law, Journals and Wills book are listed under the appropriate folder located down the left hand side of the screen. If you select Genfair, the downloads are listed alongside the CDs in the relevant section. Both stores have a search feature and the content of each product is given. Downloads are the same price as the CDs.

BFHS has produced a resource to help in finding your missing relations. If they were baptised or buried before 1852 or married before 1837 (and in some cases later) in Bedfordshire and appear in the Parish Registers, then they will appear on our Surnames CD, available as a free download on the home page of **bfhs.org.uk**. Alternatively, the CD is available for only £10 including UK P&P, from Sales, Bedfordshire Family History Society, PO Box 214, Bedford MK41 8WB, enquiries to **bookstall@bfhs.org.uk**.

CDs for all 128 ancient Bedfordshire parishes listed below are available from:

Sales, Bedfordshire Family History Society, PO Box 214, Bedford MK41 8WB, or **bookstall@bfhs.org.uk**

Each CD or download contains, for one parish:

All Parish Register transcripts up to 1812

Searchable Indexes to the Parish Registers for:

Baptisms at least 1813-1851 (some parishes all up to 1851)

Marriages up to 1885; and all Burials to 1851

The relevant 1851 Census Index for Bedfordshire

CDs marked † also contain Monumental Inscriptions (MIs) from a graveyard in the

parish (church, chapel or cemetery). Those marked * contain records from the registers or graveyards of Nonconformist chapels in the parish, photographs, and other records are included as available.

‡ Holwell: MIs and Burials only, not Registers (now in Herts).

Prices include UK or overseas post and packing. The cost of a full set of Parish CDs is £1,250.

Any recently revised CDs are indicated by the issue number in bold. **Please note that CDs will no longer be updated** whereas downloads will be updated when more indexes and any new MI listings become available.

Parish	Price	Issue	Parish	Price	Issue
Amphill † *	£15	2	Dunton †	£15	2
Arlesey	£20	2	Eaton Bray	£20	2
Aspley Guise †	£15	4	Eaton Socon † *	£25	2
Astwick †	£10	2	Edworth †	£10	2
Barton	£15	3	Elstow †	£15	2
Battlesden	£10	2	Eversholt †	£15	2
Bedford St Cuthbert †*	£15	2	Everton	£10	2
Bedford St John *	£15	2	Eyeworth	£10	2
Bedford St Mary † *	£15	2	Farndish †	£10	1
Bedford St Paul † *	£25	2	Felmersham † *	£10	2
Bedford St Peter *	£10	2	Flitton *	£15	4
Biddenham †	£10	2	Flitwick	£10	2
Biggleswade † *	£15	2	Goldington	£10	2
Billington †	£10	2	Great Barford †	£15	3
Bletsoe	£10	2	Harlington †	£10	2
Blunham † *	£15	3	Harrod *	£10	2
Bolnhurst	£10	2	Haynes †	£20	2
Bromham †	£10	3	Henlow †	£10	2
Caddington †	£15	2	Higham Gobion	£10	2
Campton & Shefford † *	£20	2	Hockliffe † *	£10	3
Cardington † *	£15	2	Holwell † ‡	£5	1
Carlton † *	£10	2	Houghton Conquest † *	£15	2
Chalgrave	£15	2	Houghton Regis *	£15	2
Chellington	£15	2	Hulcote †	£10	2
Clapham †	£10	3	Husborne Crawley †	£20	2
Clifton	£20	3	Kempston	£15	3
Clophill †	£15	3	Kensworth †	£15	2
Cockayne Hatley	£10	2	Keysoe † *	£15	2
Colmworth †	£10	2	Knotting	£10	2
Cople †	£10	2	Langford	£15	2
Cranfield † *	£15	2	Leighton Buzzard † *	£20	6
Dean † *	£15	1	Lidlington †	£10	2
Dunstable † *	£15	2	Little Barford †	£10	1

Parish	Price	Issue	Parish	Price	Issue
Keysoe † *	£15	2	Shelton †	£10	2
Knotting	£10	2	Shillington †	£15	2
Langford	£15	2	Souldrop †	£10	2
Leighton Buzzard † *	£20	4	Southill † *	£20	2
Lidlington †	£10	2	Stagsden †	£15	2
Little Barford †	£10	1	Stanbridge *	£10	2
Little Staughton † *	£10	2	Steppingley †	£10	2
Lower Gravenhurst †	£10	2	Stevington † *	£10	2
Luton † *	£30	3	Stotfold † *	£10	2
Marston Moretaine †	£15	3	Streatley †	£10	2
Maulden † *	£15	2	Studham	£15	2
Melchbourne †	£10	2	Sundon †	£10	1
Meppershall †	£10	1	Sutton	£15	2
Millbrook	£15	2	Swineshead †	£10	2
Milton Bryan †	£10	2	Tempsford †	£10	2
Milton Ernest †	£10	2	Thurleigh	£10	2
Northill †	£15	2	Tilbrook	£10	2
Oakley †	£10	2	Tilsworth † *	£10	2
Odell †	£10	2	Tingrith †	£10	2
Old Warden †	£15	2	Toddington † *	£15	2
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Potsgrove †	£10	2	Upper Stondon	£10	2
Potton † *	£20	3	Westoning †	£10	3
Pulloxhill	£10	2	Whipsnade †	£10	2
Ravensden †	£10	2	Wilden †	£15	2
Renhold	£10	2	Willington †	£10	2
Ridgmont † *	£15	2	Wilstead †	£20	2
Riseley	£10	2	Woburn † *	£20	2
Roxton † *	£10	2	Wootton	£15	2
Salford †	£10	2	Wrestlingworth †	£15	3
Sandy † *	£15	1	Wymington	£10	1
Sharnbrook	£10	2	Yelden †	£10	2

SUGGESTION BOX



Your committee is continually looking for ways to improve what is offered to members and following the useful responses from the recent Members' Questionnaire, we thought how could we keep the ideas coming.

So, to encourage more feedback from members at meetings we now have a suggestion box. For members who are not able to use the suggestion box we invite you to email us at bfhs@bfhs.org.uk.

Your committee appreciates any help, ideas or suggestions that you may have regarding any aspect of the BFHS organisation.

WHERE TO FIND US

Correspondence for the Executive Committee should be addressed to the appropriate person and sent to:

Bedfordshire Family History Society

PO Box 214 BEDFORD MK41 8WB	Internet: bfhs.org.uk Email: bfhs@bfhs.org.uk Web Sales: parishchest.com genfair.co.uk
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The following email addresses are also available:

chairman@bfhs.org.uk	Society Chairman
secretary@bfhs.org.uk	Society Secretary
treasurer@bfhs.org.uk	Society Treasurer
journal@bfhs.org.uk	Journal Co-ordinator
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(1 January - 31 December)

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2. Where it must be supplied to HMRC, e.g. in connection with gift aid submissions.
3. Where we are required to do so by law.

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